

True Northerner.

PAW PAW, MICHIGAN, APRIL 20, 1877.

SERMON.

Science and the Bible.

BY IRVING A. SEARLES.

The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handywork.—Ps. 19, 1. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.—Ps. 119, 105.

The first quotation speaks of God's revelation of himself through the works of nature; the second, of God's revelation of himself through his written Word.

It is urged that in essential particulars these two revelations do not agree: that the crowbar of the Geologist and the telescope of the Astronomer brand as false many important declarations of Scripture. To inquire into these alleged contradictions between Science and the Bible is the purpose of this sermon.

First, then, we remark that, thus far in the world's history nearly every important truth in science in its striving for public recognition has met the opposition of the religious world.

1. The church taught the doctrine of the earth's roundness. Theologians arose from the study of their Bibles and said that the earth was flat. From such Scripture as the following they deduced their theory of the earth's form: "Praise Him ye heavens of heavens and ye waters that be above the heavens." "The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of heaven were opened." These passages are, of course, purely poetical, but theologians, trailing all this beautiful imagery in the dust, literalized them. They thus found the earth to be a vast box of two apartments. In the lower section the human family dwelt; in the upper portion God and the angels lived. The angels found employment in pulling and pushing the sun and stars hither and thither to light the earth. To them was also entrusted the work of opening and shutting the "windows of heaven." When they opened the "windows" the rains descended, when they closed them the rains ceased. St. Augustine conceived the possibility of the earth's roundness, but regarded as absurd the idea that men resided on the other side of it, assigning as the reason for his view that "Scripture speaks of no such descendants of Adam." Thus the Bible was pitted against this discovery.

2. The church taught the earth to be flat against the idea that the earth revolves around the sun. In 1615 Galileo is tried by the Roman Inquisition. He is charged with teaching that the earth moves. The tribunal before whom he appears brings in the following decision:—"The first proposition that the sun is the centre and does not revolve about the earth, is foolish, absurd, false in theology and heretical, because expressly contrary to Holy Scripture." Thus the Bible is made to hurl its anathema against this discovery.

3. When the telescope found other planets than those of our own solar system it provoked an attack from the religious world. It was said that there could be only seven planets because of the seven golden candlesticks of Revelations and the seven churches of Asia. These "candlesticks" and "churches" were said to be types of the seven planets.

4. The church opposed the study of Anatomy and Medicine. St. Augustine says of medical men: "With a cruel zeal for science they have dissected the bodies of the dead and have inhumanly pried into the secrets of the human body to learn the nature of the disease and its exact seat and how it might be cured." About the year 1250 Pope Boniface VIII. denounced dissection as sacrilegious and issued a formal edict against it. In 1722 Rev. Edward Massey, of England, preached a sermon on "The Dangerous and Sinful practice of Inoculation." In the religious literature of that day we find physicians referred to as connected with sorcery and "in league with the devil." In some localities when doctors are making out their bills they seem to be in league with the devil now!

5. At one time in Scotland the farmer who used a flax-mill was excommunicated from the Scotch church. This is the text that forbade its use: "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." The Scriptures say that the wind blows as it pleases, but the flax-mill compelled the wind to blow in one direction!

If turning from the survey of the past let us consider some of the present features of supposed collision between science and the Bible.

1. It is alleged that Science and the Bible do not agree regarding the AGE OF OUR EARTH.—We have interpreted the Bible to teach that the earth is about six thousand years old, but Geology is supposed to affirm that millions of years have rolled around since our planet came into existence. In 1841 Sir Charles Lyell visited Niagara Falls for the purpose of geological research. He found that the water in its descent wore away one foot of the rock per year. The Falls are supposed to have started near Queenstown, seven miles distant. If this supposition is correct, the Falls have been there thirty-six thousand years. In 1854 in dredging Lake Zurich, Switzerland, the remains of a number of human habitations were found many feet beneath the bed of the lake. Similar works in that region brought to light two hundred distinct settlements of these lake inhabitants.—These remains were covered with a kind of peat that is supposed to have been of very slow formation. This is but a mere hint of the kind of argument that seems to call for a greater antiquity of our earth than six thousand years. But supposing this statement of Geology to be beyond question, it would not conflict with Bible teaching. The Scripture says that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" but it nowhere says when that "beginning" was. Man's interpretation, and not the Bible, has set the year, and almost the day and hour, when our earth was ushered into existence.

2. It is said that there is a conflict between Science and the Bible concerning the MANNER OF THE EARTH'S CREATION. We have supposed that God made the world at once out of nothing and then hurled it into its orbit. But Lord Rensselaer with his gigantic telescope scans the heavens and observes a strange appearance of the nebula or floating vaporous substances. This gaseous matter appears to condense and form into what might be worlds. From this the well known nebula theory of Herschel and Laplace originates. Imagine a time when that

part of the universe occupied by our solar system was only space; then imagine a vast world of flaming fire whirling through this space; as this moves it revolves, and as it revolves it condenses, and as it condenses it throws off portions of its outer rim; these particles of molten mass are hurled so far by the law of Repulsion, when they are checked in their course by the law of Attraction. The central mass is the sun, whence came the earth and her sister planets. This theory, also, may be adopted without conflicting with Bible statements. Scripture says that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but it nowhere says how that creation was effected. The fact and not the manner of the creation is asserted.

3. Again it is said that Science and the Bible are not agreed as to the METHOD OF MAN'S CREATION. The Bible has been supposed to teach that God made man by one specific creative act but the evolutionist says that he has developed through a long series of lower forms. Regarding this, two things may be said:

(a) The evolution theory can not, as yet, be regarded as an established truth in science.—Prof. Huxley, one of the ablest exponents of this theory, in his recent visit to this country, delivered in New York three lectures confessedly for the purpose of demonstrating the doctrine of evolution. Scribner's Monthly, in commenting upon these addresses, remarks editorially: "Men went away feeling that after all, the theory of evolution was nothing but a theory, that it is still so much of an hypothesis that it can lay no valid claim to a place in science."

(b) We can accept the evolution theory and still believe in the Bible. God created man, and it is immaterial to me whether he formed him by one direct act or by the law of development. Prof. Gray, of Harvard, says: "Religion is no more affected by the Darwinian theory than it was when Newton discovered the theory of gravitation. The attributes of God are enhanced rather than lessened by considering only one primary act of creation out of which all other changes evolved."

We affirm, then, that one may accept these theories of science and yet be consistent in believing the Bible, also. Three concluding reflections suggest themselves:

1. Let the church no longer oppose scientific research. Let us not fail to learn here a lesson from the past.

2. Do not attempt to make the Bible teach what it was never designed to teach. As an answer to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" it is infallible, but as a text-book on Geology or Astronomy, it makes no pretensions.

3. The Bible rightly interpreted has nothing to fear from the investigations of science.—Gold is not harmed by testing it. As Dr. Cummings has expressed it: "The crowbar of the Geologist will never upheave the Rock of Ages, the telescope of the Astronomer will never find a speck on the Sun of Righteousness."

Chicago National Reform Convention. This Convention met in Farwell Hall, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 10 and 11, with over a hundred delegates from Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Jonathan Edwards, D. D., L. L. D., was chosen Chairman, and Dr. R. B. Cannon, of Wisconsin, Secretary. Addresses were delivered by Dr. McAllister, Dr. Edwards, Dr. W. W. Everts, Prof. C. A. Blanchard, Pres. Wallace, Pres. Blanchard, and others. The following resolutions were unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTIONS.
1. That it is of the utmost importance in the present stage of our national history to emphasize the fact that this country was settled by Christians who came hither with a free and open Bible and founded free institutions of government on the basis of the principles of the Christian religion.
2. That the most vital national issues of today involve the relations of Christianity and the state; and that the truth which Christianity teaches concerning these relations never demanded clearer assertion than now, viz: That Almighty God is the ultimate source of all authority in civil government; that Jesus Christ as ruler of nations has given a moral standard for their conduct, and that the standard of His word is their supreme law.
3. That we preserve with grave apprehensions the determined and often successful attempts which are made to expel the Bible from our public schools, to abolish the oath, prayer in our national and state legislatures, days of fasting and thanksgiving, and other Christian institutions of our state and nation, and so to divorce the American government from all connection with Christianity.
4. That a written constitution, as fundamental law, ought to provide an explicit and undeniable basis for the vital institutions of the nation for which it is formed; and the fact that the constitution of the United States may be, and is, used against the existing institutions of our government constitutes the best of reason for a religious amendment.
5. That such an amendment of our national constitution, harmonizing as it would with all the precedents of our early history, and with religious acknowledgments in many of our state constitutions, could not conflict with any individual rights of conscience, just as the establishment of state education does not conflict with the rights of citizens who believe that education belongs only to the family and church, or the constitutional authentication of the war power does not conflict with the rights of those who denounce even defensive war as sin; and further if there be any plea for rights of conscience it must be entered against the Christian laws and institutions rather than against a constitutional basis on which they might rest.
6. That the indifference of many professing Christians, as well as the assents of open enemies, calls imperatively on all who discern the danger that threatens our Christian institutions of government, to unite and labor earnestly for their maintenance; and that, taking courage from the review of the past, and pledging ourselves to God and to one another, we shall use all means in our power to uphold, perfect, and hand down to posterity the inheritance bequeathed to us by our fathers.

Upon the pending suit for the collection of the laboratory deficit of the University the Battle Creek Journal (published at the home of Regent Collier) says:

"The regents at their last meeting rejected a proposition to discontinue the suits against Drs. Rose and Douglas for the recovery of deficits in the laboratory accounts. In this we think they did the proper thing. The suits should go on, because the judicial tribunal is the only one competent to such an investigation and review as will be satisfactory. The duty of the State is to recover the money which is its due, and which is in the hands either of Rose or Douglas, or a portion of it in the hands of each. The adoption of the above proposition would have been an abandonment of its claims on the part of the State, so far as the action of the regents would make it such. Let the chancery suit then go on; let the courts settle what nothing but courts can, and the parties most interested and implicated bide their time."

Saxe Holm is getting to be a mystery of production no less than of personality. He, she or it is now announced as making a first direct address to the young folks in a story entitled "The First Time"—a name almost as enigmatical as the author's own. The tale is to be published in St. Nicholas for May, among contributions from John G. Whittier, Sidney Lanier, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Donald G. Mitchell and other distinguished writers.

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8:40 P. M., Kalamazoo Accommodation, east.

Trains return to Paw Paw on departure of Michigan Central Trains from Lawton.

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Time Table, Dec. 10, 1876.

*Mail. *Kalamazoo Accommodation. *Night Express.

Chicago, Leave 5:00am 3:50pm 9:00pm

Kalamazoo, 5:45 4:35 9:45

Lawton, 6:40 5:30 10:35

Michigan City, 7:32